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## THE CURSE OF EVE.

BY MARGARET BISLAND.

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DOES not the tree of knowledge still bear fruit accursed for the daughters of Eve, who did eat thereof and lost her Eden?

I am moved to put this question and give it answer, since I believe that it is pertinent to the present discussion concerning the decline in the birth-rate among native-Americans. That decline is evident. Vital statistics go far to prove it. Undoubtedly, the Americans of the old stock, the posterity of the pioneers, who, until some sixty years ago, were steadily on the increase, have in little more than half a century begun to show marked evidences of diminution. Until 1840, the growth in population by native reproduction was estimated as seven times greater than the growth by immigration. So sure and rapid was this normally increscent tendency of the people, that Benjamin Franklin considered the fecundity of his nation phenomenal. Thomas Jefferson prophesied that by 1875 the population must number no less than eighty millions; and this estimate was evidently based upon the reproductivity of the people at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War and in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

At that time, without the artificial assistance of immigration, the population of many localities doubled itself in a quarter of a century, and families numbering from eight to twelve children were the rule, and not as to-day the exception. But the native-Americans, it now appears, have not fulfilled Jefferson's prognostication, though by the census of 1900 it is found that we number over 76,000,000 in all. But from these we should deduct more than 34,000,000 of souls before we can arrive at an estimate of the native white increase; 24,060,000, including immigrants or the children of immigrants, do not belong in the grand total, and 10,000,000 again must be excluded as negroes.

If Thomas Jefferson, therefore, could look over our latest census returns, he would have reason for sentiments of surprise and chagrin. In the old colonial State of Massachusetts, he would find that, of its present 2,805,304 inhabitants, more than half are foreigners or the children of foreign-born parents. In New York city, boasting the greatest urban population in the United States, 76.6 per cent. of its citizens are foreign-born or the children of aliens. Fall River, the American city claiming the highest birth-rate, claims also the greatest number of foreign-born inhabitants; and the census statistics for 1890 give the birth-rate per thousand among foreign-born inhabitants as 38.29, while among the native-born it registers but 26.35.

Guided thus by the most reliable of official statistics, by personal observation and by the pessimistic utterances of serious, patriotic and thoughtful men, could Jefferson or Franklin, if among us to-day, arrive at any other conclusion than that the vitality of the native-Americans is on the decline? Assuming that the next census will show the existence in our States of a population numbering one hundred millions, is there any reason to doubt, with the present tendency to reduction in the native birth-rate, that that population will be even more exotic than that which we now claim? Shall we not, therefore, have good reason to admit, that the best blood of Europe, from which we have so far drawn, has failed to send any strong, sure roots into this soil?

Why this is so, we may seriously and carefully question ourselves. If the racial stamina of the Anglo-Saxon so quickly and markedly declines, what fate is to befall the posterity of the far less admirable type of immigrant now coming from over seas? Will the new arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe survive, where the Northern and Western European is failing to maintain himself?

I, for one, can see no reason to believe they will. Not so long, at least, as the deleterious influence of our peculiar western civilization continues to disturb and exhaust the reproductive forces and discourage the maternal instincts in the women of the people who seek Americanization.

To speak frankly and to the point, this failure in natural and wholesome increase among our white natives is due to nothing more or less than the over-education and abnormal public activities so ardently encouraged among our women since the close of

the Civil War. We take too slight an account of this when we wonder uneasily at our inability to plant an individual, self-sustaining, indigenous people in the United States. We forget, or refuse to realize, what is inevitably to follow as the result of a false equality permitted between the sexes; and we have not rightly interpreted or sustained that masculine instinct, old as the race itself, which regards as an unmixed evil any emancipation of the woman that excites her to effort and attainment beyond the bounds of domesticity.

The denial to woman of an equal share in man's intellectual and physical career is not, as the near-sighted advocates of feminine enfranchisement would have us believe, a useless relic of barbarism and savagery. It is not an indication of mere male covetousness, selfishness and blind prejudice, upheld and exercised through ages by force of sheer physical superiority, and serving now as a stumbling-block in the path of beneficent progress. True enough, perhaps, it is a tradition inherited from our barbaric and Asiatic ancestors; nevertheless, it flows from an ancient and profound realization of and respect for an inexorable law of nature—a law that never fails to deprive intellectually developed woman of her fecundity. It flows also from a knowledge, gained through the tragedy of experience, that only in the domestic shelter does civilized humanity find the environment congenial to reproductivity and proper development.

Why this is so, only Nature herself can give us a satisfactory answer. Why, to fulfil her most obvious mission, that of maternity, all the best and freshest forces of the female are required, and why participation in the pleasures and responsibilities, exhilarations and labors of a non-domestic career renders fulfilment of this function repugnant and all but impossible to women, I do not assume here to make clear. It is my intention only to show that it is a fixed law, established for the preservation of human life. It was first outraged, then interpreted and accepted, by wise and patient Asia. Thence we receive our initial record of its operation; and strong historical evidence bears witness to the dire results meted out by avenging Nature to the European nation that attempted to gain a great civilization without duly guarding against the curse of Eve inevitably following upon feminine participation in the life of men.

Reading the third chapter of Genesis aright, is it difficult to

pierce through its allegorical disguise, and perceive why the Fall was attributed to woman and the forbidden fruit? The legend comes to us from Asia. It is so evidently founded upon a tremendous race tragedy, which once imperilled the existence of the human family and the progress of its evolution out of savagery, that the wonder is we have failed to read it understandingly and take its meaning to heart. Few and simple as are the words of the relation, they show us, with startling severity of outline, the whole race pictured in the persons of one man and one woman. In Eden they stand on the threshold of those new dominions and desires that reveal themselves to humanity at every stage of its higher spiritual development. What else are we reasonably to interpret as the serpent, "more subtle than any beast of the field," but the evil whisper of a false ambition, calling woman away from her appointed and primordial task, to aid at this crisis in a short, swift struggle for the attainment of a dazzling intellectual and material aggrandizement?

But the fruit of knowledge, that talisman which insures the highest human power, when plucked by the feminine hand, proves so grievous an outrage upon the law of orderly and consistent evolution, that it all but destroys the race daring thus to refute Nature's processes and principles. Checked and crippled by this perversion of divinely appointed rules, reeling, in consequent enfeeblement of mind and body, back again well-nigh into the blackness of the savage state, the race, in Asia, was taught under the ban that fell upon it in Eden, to fear all influences that call the female from her normal mission.

In that drama of the Creation, can we fail then to perceive how Asia learned certain lessons and truths concerning the preservation of the human species? Asia populated the world. To-day, should Europe, America and Oceania be robbed of their last inhabitant, she could populate them anew, for the Asiatic refuses all emancipation to his woman.

The laws and religions of that hoary continent lay terrible fetters upon any development of her individuality beyond her home, her wifehood and motherhood. Immured in the zenana, her face covered, her feet crippled, the existence of a soul to save or a brain to educate often denied her; given in marriage in her infancy, enslaved to masculine authority from the hour of her birth and herded in polygamous wedlock, every means has been

taken to confine the woman to her home and to her natural task. Yet, as we consider intelligently that Continent and her doctrine of female seclusion, we see no more nor less than the primitive but correct instincts of the mighty Queen-bee of the race, guarding with jealous care the fountain-head of civilized human life.

Deeply, indeed, were her age-old convictions fixed in the brains of the first of her children who wandered beyond her borders toward the West. We find the early European clinging desperately to the Asiatic regulations respecting the female career. They were sorely troubled with fears of actual extinction at the necessity of giving women a measure of liberty. Out of the mists which hang about the childhood of the great Dorian and Ionian families, who founded their colonies on the borders of the Black and Mediterranean seas, there echo the legends of the Amazon and the Sauromatæ. These myths are inexplicable only when we lose sight of the fact, that the female warrior merely personified for the early Greek the danger menacing his infant nations through the possible emancipation of the women. The Python and Gorgon were no less dreaded, as devastating evils, than was the Amazonian horde. Such heroes as Hercules and Theseus, Castor and Pollux were called upon to destroy them.

Passing still farther to the West, men lost little by little their Oriental dread of consequences to follow any disturbance of the balance of power between the sexes. Life and its changing conditions required a readjustment and reapportionment of responsibilities between the sexes. The slight enlightenment of the women not only failed to bring about the destruction of the tribe, but was assistant and essential to its advancement. That both Spartan and Athenian fell short of realizing the vast force and widespread influence of the Roman, was due to lack of comprehension of the true power and mission of the woman in the task of empire-building. The ease with which the Roman achieved his supremacy over Greek, savage and barbarian alike was due to the fact, that his civilization had afforded her full opportunities for that high yet normal development through which woman can insure the invincibility of her race.

M. Pellison says:

"Roman law was at first very severe upon the wife. But custom was less rigorous than the law. From the earliest period in Roman history the wife, enthroned near the family hearth, was queen in the

atrium. Gide, in his study upon the condition of the wife, says: The atrium was not like the gynæceum in a Greek house, a secluded apartment, an upper floor, a hidden and inaccessible retreat. It was the very centre of the Roman house, the common hall where the whole family assembled, where friends and strangers were received. There near the hearth was the altar of the Lares; and around this sanctuary were gathered the most precious and sacred possessions of the family. All these treasures were placed under the guard of the wife. She, as head of the family, offered herself the sacrifices to the Lares. She presided over the domestic labors of the slaves. She directed the education of the children, who, even after they passed out of childhood, continued to submit to her authority. In short, she shared with her husband the administration of the property and the rule of the house.' ”\*

Thus, in the great days of the republic, the Roman woman stood, to her men and her country, in exactly the same relationship as our pioneer women of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries stood to the men who were engaged in founding this Republic of the West. Her crown of distinction was her pure wifehood and motherhood. Lucretia, Virginia, Cornelia and Veturia were no less invaluablely ennobling in the ideals they personified, no less indicative of the majesty and character of Rome, than were Horatius and Regulus, Cincinnatus and Brutus. The vigor and value of the Roman matron were made evident in her sons. To mother great men was her highest distinction. Hannibal was overcome, and Rome became the dictator of the world, by virtue of the fact that the Roman woman of the Republic was the finest flower of femininity produced by any civilization preceding the Christian era.

She proved that men are what their mothers make them, and that the woman within her home, and busied with the care of children there, fulfils three offices of such supreme importance that only so long as she does fulfil them can any state of society remain pure and permanent. There only does she find the environment required for the upbringing of a powerful progeny, that insures continuance of a national type and its finest traditions. There she and her children supply to the man that object in which, while laboring to afford them protection and support, he centres all his racial pride, his sanest ambition and his truest patriotism. There also, mindful of the family cohesion and privacy, and the serenity of its moral as well as physical health,

\* “Roman Life in Pliny's Time.”

she serves as the great bow-anchor of conservatism, which maintains the cleanliness and steadiness of the social state.

Thus and only thus, through her motherhood and her domesticity, does woman safeguard the whole nation, its ideals and its social organization. Then and only then, is she absolutely on a plane of equality with the man. Without her motherhood and the privileges and privacies and securities of the home life to exact in behalf of herself and her young, she has nothing of importance to contribute to the work of human elevation. Indeed, after a certain point, the non-domestic and childless woman is a menace to social purity and to national stability. The brilliant, graceful, cultured, ambitious and wholly untrammelled lady of the moribund Roman Republic and the short-lived Roman Empire lived to illustrate and substantiate this distressing fact.

Her emancipation came when her race forgot the old curse laid upon Eve. In his lust for rapidly gained wealth and swiftly acquired empire, the Roman failed to perceive that, by filling the house with slaves and luxury, he committed the self-destroying crime of denying to his women their home-compelling avocations. At this point, he was forced to give them a share in the non-domestic life, or to follow the example of the luxurious and slave-loving Asiatic and immure the idle womankind in the seraglio.

Deprived of her dignity and importance, through loss of occupation in her house, it is no wonder that the woman of Rome turned instinctively to the development of her intellectual forces. It was the one field which offered her an ostensibly useful exercise of her energies. It was also the easiest and most agreeable means of arriving at companionship with man, and a resumption of her share of responsibility in national affairs. And the fruit of the tree of knowledge was not denied her. The gates to learning stood wide, and men encouraged her to take as full possession of its treasures as she liked. They were charmed by her wonderful adaptability and by the false splendor her culture shed on Roman life, and we read with amazement of the liberty and enlightenment she claimed as her right—of Cicero's Tullia trained by him in philosophy, and of Hortensia so skilled in oratory that her father boasted she argued an important case better than a good advocate. It was the golden age of learning and liberty among women. If these two great instruments when placed in the hands of women are assistants to the upward, onward march of



a race, and are safeguards of its stability and integrity, then surely these women of Rome should have played some honorable part in the story of the Empire: they should have done somewhat to exalt its ideals, modify its brutality, cleanse its morals and stay its decay. In vain we search for evidences of their attempts at assuming this beneficent rôle in the unbalanced and libertine society where they freely wedded and divorced, speculated with their own fortunes, and strove for political power. Says Mommsen, with reference to the social evils which rankly flourished at the time of Cæsar's dictatorship:

"An equally characteristic feature in the brilliant decay of this period was the emancipation of women. . . . But it was not merely from the guardianship of father or husband that women felt themselves emancipated. . . . They also acted as politicians, appeared in party conferences, and took part with their money and their intrigues in the wild coterie-doings of the time."

From the date of this emancipation, we begin to mark the rapid degeneration of Roman life and of the Roman type. "Morals," says de Tocqueville, "are the work of women. Consequently, whatever affects the condition of women, their habits and their opinions, has great political importance in my eyes." The sound logic of this reasoning is made most evident by the state of Roman society in that period when its women had secured their legal and social equality with men.

"There was no more seclusion for women. They became acquainted with life, tasted its charms, but, unfortunately, found pleasure in its intrigues."\* Divorce was granted very easily. Seneca speaks of ladies who reckoned years by husbands and not by consulships. Juvenal, in one of his satires, laughs grimly at one woman who was wedded and divorced eight times in twelve months. In consequence, as there were few or no children to claim or to secure the common interests of the wedded couples, wifehood was unguarded and motherhood was considered a grievous imposition. The family in the time of Julius Cæsar had dwindled to less than reproduction of the parents. Men were forced to seek heirs by adoption, since their wives produced no sons to continue the noble or royal names.

\* "Roman Life in Pliny's Time."—M. Pellison.

Again we quote from Mommsen :

“ Celibacy and childlessness became more and more common, especially among the upper classes. While, among these, marriage had for long been regarded as a burden which people took upon themselves, at the best, in the public interest, we now encounter, even in Cato and those who shared Cato’s sentiments, the maxim to which Polybius a century before traced the decay of Hellas, that it is the duty of a citizen to keep great wealth together, and, therefore, not to beget too many children. Where were the times when the designation ‘ child-producer ’ (*proletarius*) had been a term of honor for the Romans? In consequence of such a social condition, the Latin stock in Italy underwent an alarming diminution, and its fair provinces were overspread partly by parasitic immigrants, partly by sheer desolation.”\*

Julius Cæsar himself realized and attempted to check this decline of his race; and Augustus enforced the celebrated Julian and Poppæan laws directed against celibates and childless persons. Laws, however, are futile to stay such decay as had attacked the Latins; and, long before the barbarians came to possess the Imperial City, the true Roman blood and type were extinct. Eloquently and painfully significant is it of the slough of immorality into which Rome had sunk, and by which eventually she died, that women of noble and ignoble degree intrigued and fought for place and power about that bloody Roman throne, and that, of the many empresses who sat thereon, not one is now remembered save for her crimes and debaucheries.

When the Empire fell at last, we witness a blight descending upon civilization, not unlike that which ages before drove the man and woman out of Eden. In spite of the privileges so recently accorded to her sex under the Roman law, the woman of Europe appeared to have feared or forgotten them. Eve-like, she returned to meek acceptance of and subjection to the consequences of the old curse. In sorrow she resumed her task of bringing forth children, her desire was to her husband, and he ruled over her. That without demur she returned so humbly to a sober and diligent fulfilment of her ancient and important duties is inexplicable almost, until we realize how wise, with a wisdom indeed divine and supernatural, were the preachers of the story of the birth of Christ during the period following the fall of Rome.

The disease in that civilization, the poison of that example,

\* “ The History of Rome.”

might have infected and fatally injured her conquerors, had not the inspired relation of the Nativity made so powerful an appeal to European imagination. Here was a new ideal, by the light of which men and women began to find again the rock on which is founded all true racial morals, racial strength and racial hopes, the worship and protection of pure motherhood. The story of Christ's Advent set a halo of bright and touching beauty about the rôle of maternity. Men for the first time were called upon to revere their Deity as a helpless babe set in the midst of a lowly family life. Art and story pictured him most adorably, most convincingly, as an infant in the arms of his mother; and, indeed, it is the tender child on Mary's bosom, and not the haggard man and martyr upon the tree, who most truly redeemed Europe.

Motherhood thereafter was invested with a holy dignity. The least peasant woman in her maternity rejoiced to follow the worthy and uplifting example of the Madonna, which glows in splendid and startling contrast to the abuse, the degradation of the woman's mighty instinct and duty under the Roman Empire.

With the rise of this new ideal and the re-establishment of woman upon her true throne of equality and in her sphere of natural power, man labored again, Adam-like, by the sweat of his brow, to maintain the organization of the family and afford privacy and protection to the wife and mother in her own home. The shifting peoples of Europe were thus enabled to settle down, to strike root deeply into the soil, to aim at a surer civilization than that of Rome, and to develop a more powerful, and yet only slightly less prolific, type than that which Asia has produced.

Thus, through the conservation of her women, Europe has achieved her true destiny: for lack of that very precaution we, of the United States, bid fair to dare the fate that overwhelmed the equally ambitious Roman.

We fail or refuse to perceive the violently reactionary influence upon the race of that tendency of our Occidental civilization, which, in withdrawing the woman more and more from her home, tends to destroy the true balance of the physical and moral forces between the sexes.

The most marked and deleterious effect of Americanization upon woman is the false energies and abnormal ambitions it ex-

cites in her life. Her endeavor is no longer toward the realization and glorification of her sex in its femininity. The education she receives tends to render her either contemptuous of or indifferent to her own peculiar forces and their normal expression. For them, she not only strives, but is encouraged, to substitute an individuality which is purely hybrid and unessential, a grotesque falsetto masculinity.

Yet, for this perversion of her true character and influence, she is no more directly responsible than was the woman of Rome. So long as she found honorable, independent, profitable employment in her domestic environment, she rested there supremely content. Her hopes and dreams, her pride and patriotism and her ambitions were realized in her children.

It was when the greedy current of commercialism tore out of her hands all her home employment, that she followed her tasks to the mills and factories. Then she first began to envy and grasp at the estates and prerogatives of men. As skilled hands are guided best by trained minds, it behooved men to give this willing, cheap, and efficacious feminine labor a fitting education. Forced thus to gain her support outside the home, it is no matter for wonder that she has found it necessary to demand legal and social privileges, property rights and new marriage laws.

So far-reaching and thorough has been her alienation from the true aims of her sex, so complete has been the hasty sacrifice made to the mere temporal and transitory prosperity of this Republic, that we now detect as a consequence certain tendencies to decay gnawing already at the roots of its new civilization.

First, in the diminution of the family; and, again, in the weakening of the marriage tie.

The prodigious increase in divorces among Americans of every class and religion is, perhaps, the most serious menace to the moral and physical stability of our race, that has resulted from the non-domestic avocations of the average woman.

By the last census, the increase in divorce is estimated as two and one half times greater than the increase in population. In the Western Reserve of Ohio, there is one divorce to every eleven marriages. For so appalling a social condition as this, we find no parallel save in the empire of the Romans. There "the law of divorce became more widely extended and more frequently resorted to, and nothing tended more to sap the morals of the

Romans than the laxity which was thus introduced into the holiest and most delicate of all human relations.”\*

Vain and empty have been proven the hope and faith that from the highly educated mother profound advantages must accrue to the nation, in the consequently superior mental equipment of her child. The highly educated woman avoids or is incapable of maternity. The exhilaration of monetary profit in exchange for her physical and mental toil, and the pursuit of her purely selfish pleasure or fortune, lure her from the self-sacrifice of maternity and the restraints of wedded life. Or, when wedded, she brings forth few or no children.

Always, among our upper and middle classes, where the daughters and wives enjoy the broadest and most varied mental culture, and where their avocations are semi-masculine by choice, flourish that blight and dry rot of the race, numerical decline. On the superior vitality of the well-nigh illiterate European peasant woman do we now depend largely for the maintenance of our population. On her we shall depend more and more, as time and the pressure brought to bear upon the native-American woman widen the field of her own non-domestic interests.

Great as we appear in our wealth and strength, should Europe cease to nourish us with the warm blood of her vast maternity, who can doubt that we would fall an easy prey to the constitutional fragility and consequent vice that destroyed the ill-balanced and defeminized Roman Empire?

As a nation, we now stand most in need of a re-elevation and rejuvenescence of the precious and powerful motherhood ideal. This, and not new incentives to the spread of education or expansion of the spheres of public activities and influence among our women, is required to produce a permanent and powerful race of our own soil; a true autochthon, a stable, homogeneous and more noble type than Europe has yet created, and which as yet we only fondly imagine we see in the American of to-day. Wide as is the gulf which separates us from the East, the hand of Nature is still heavy upon us. Not yet, even in America, will she permit Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge and at the same time allow the race to escape eviction from this latest Eden of mankind, this fair garden of ours, planted in the western world.

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\* “A General History of Rome.”—Merivale.